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Mary McGrory

Counter Spy Editors
Waiting, On Guard

The young co-editors of Counter-Spy, who are being unofficially fingered in the death of Richard J. Welch, CIA station chief in Athens, insist they are not "criminally or morally responsible."

They printed Welch's name in two issues, as they print other agents' names, because they want to "demystify" the agency for Americans and give "personal culpability for war crimes" — not to provide a hit list for foreign terrorists.

"We went into shock when we heard the news," says Winslow Peck, a 29-year-old Vietnam veteran, who served in the Air Force component of the National Security Council. "A friend called us and told us Welch had been killed and we were being blamed."

They got up a hasty, rhetorical statement saying the CIA was guilty for sending Welch on a covert mission. This prompted an unprecedented public tirade from CIA director William E. Colby, who called them "paranoic and irresponsible."

"THEY ARE USING the casket as a podium, they've sicked every right-wing thug in the country on us," says Tim Butz, 28, a stocky, bearded Vietnam veteran, who at 17 was such a rabid anti-Communist he volunteered for the Air Force and Vietnam. Because he has been out front, he gets most of the threats that have been coming in to their neat, quiet office. The last one, received last Friday, was from "a friend," who said he had heard seven men in a Silver Spring bar plotting to "come and waste you" at 2 p.m.

"The CIA was better prepared for this than we were," says Winslow Peck (an alias he adopted to protect his Missouri family during his anti-war days).

"We've gotten our heads together, and we've stopped taking it personally," says Butz. "We know they're really after Church and Pike and the other critics. It was safe to go after us because nobody had ever heard of us."

COUNTER-SPY, a quarterly publication sponsored by the Fifth Estate, is funded by the Stern Foundation. Fifth Estate was founded, as a muck-raking operation on the intelligence community, by novelist Norman Mailer on his 50th birthday.

The magazine identified Welch as Peru CIA station chief in two issues. The editors found his name first in a 1969 German publication called "Who's Who in CIA," were told it later by two Maryknoll priests who saw it in a Peruvian Spanish-language paper, and completed their research from clues — mostly gaps — in the State Department biographical listing.

Whether Counter-Spy was the source of the Athens News story which printed Welch's name on Nov. 25 is not known. John Horn, the editor, who is Greek despite his name, has told the Greek press that he was called upon by a committee of three men he had never met before who gave him the names of seven alleged agents in all. Horn printed them, with addresses and telephone numbers, and a suggestion to his readers that they call them directly and ask them what they were doing in Athens.

COUNTER-SPY is having an advisory board meeting this week to decide about continuing to publish agents' names.

Peck thinks in view of the magazine's new worldwide notoriety, they might be targeting them for assassination. Butz is not sure.

Says Butz, "All of us here are convinced these things will happen again. The CIA is the most visible symbol of U.S. interference in foreign countries, and it is hated. There will be retribution even if we stop printing the names."

Peck adds, "There is only one way to prevent them from being shot and that is for the CIA to withdraw from overseas and for Congress to abolish the agency. It doesn't look like Congress will do it. This will be a long, long struggle."

THEY WERE NOT surprised at Colby's outburst. They've been saying "bad things" about him since 1973, when they opposed his confirmation as CIA director. They called him, for his work in the Phoenix program, "the most heinous architect of mass murder since Adolph Eichman" — which Butz now thinks was "a bit heavy."

"Here's Colby," says Peck, "tying us to the murder of one person, and he has failed to account for 20,000 people that were killed in Operation Phoenix."

None of the seven editors of Counter-Spy know what's going to happen to them, although they are sure nothing will until after Welch's funeral. The Department of Justice is looking into the situation.

"There will be no official moves until after the funeral," says Butz. "At least they've got the good taste for that, even though they're doing this campaign against us."

They have gotten cooperation from the metropolitan police since the threats, but have not heard from the FBI although one threat was made on television. They are taking precautions.

A CIA spokesman refused to say what, if any, security precautions are being taken against the six other men the Athens paper identified as CIA agents.

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